Letters . . .

THE NAVY'S RECORD

To the Editor—Some points made by Douglas C. Lovelace and Thomas-Durell Young in "Joint Doctrine Development: Overcoming a Legacy" (*JFQ*, Winter 96–97) misrepresented my efforts at the Naval Doctrine Command. It was not a response to the spotty record of the Navy on doctrine. It was my own initiative and did not have universal support in the command because many thought I was wasting my time. Fortunately, the commander during this period, RADM Fred Lewis, believed that it was value added.

My look at the evolution of naval doctrine was an endeavor to convince my colleagues that it was not unwise or unprofessional to write down how the Navy intends to conduct its business. It was also an attempt to ensure that the great lessons of history are not lost (see my article entitled "Developing Naval Doctrine . . . *From the Sea*," *JFQ*, issue 9). When I got to the Naval Doctrine Command it was often said that navies have never had any doctrine—hence most went about their jobs without ever looking to the past. I set out to correct that misperception, which had nothing to do with responding to outside critics of the Navy.

As for the comment that my work amounted to unconvincing revisionism, I would say that the jury is still out on that question. If the Navy goes about writing doctrine without any regard to the past, then my efforts were in vain. If it is also looking back before developing doctrine, then I would say it was convincing. Based on what I hear today the Navy is examining what navies have done historically. As to whether what I wrote was convincing to outsiders is beside the point since I never sought to influence external audiences.

—James J. Tritten
Former Academic Advisor to
Commander, Naval Doctrine Command

CRASHING THROUGH THE BARRICADES

To the Editor—The prize winning essays in the RMA Essay Contest published in your last issue (*JFQ*, Spring 97) are important markers of both the direction and pace of serious thought on RMA. Williamson Murray got part of it right in his introduction—we need debate, experimentation, and reasoned discussion on where we are going, and these essays are examples of how to do it.

Unlike Murray, however, I believe the significance of the essays is not a diversity of views (that does tend to happen in a revolution!), but rather the assumptions they share. Here are a few:

A revolution really is underway. A few years ago, some historians attacked this hypothesis with gusto: "It's much too early to tell if big changes are afoot. We're experts and can assure you this is no RMA," and so on. Yet thankfully each essay gets beyond the academic point of whether there is a revolution. They all accept that there is one and go on to ask "what now?" The essays by Stavridis and Lwin address how an enemy might seek to deal with our revolution. Gumahad, Echevarria, and Morningstar each explore how the RMA will transform doctrine and organization while Schneider offers an anthropological and cybernetic perspective. The common thread running through them is that it's here, it's big, and it's a revolution.

It is an American revolution. Perhaps because it's obvious, the authors do not waste much verbiage on where it's taking place. They accept it's an American revolution. What's happening may, as Stavridis and Lwin warn, trigger other RMAs or asymmetric counters by clever General Tzus (thus we must be prudent about the course of our revolution). Doctrine may, as Gumahad, Schneider, Echevarria, and Morningstar explain, change around the world. But surely that only proves the significance of what we are doing.

Let's get on with it. Each essay advocates moving forward, seizing the dynamics driving change, and consummating this American RMA. None implies we should do so mindlessly. Each recognizes the dangers associated with change. But none recommends either turning back or trying to hold off the future. Instead, a thread of pragmatic optimism runs through each of them.

That's one of the interesting contrasts between the introduction and the essays themselves. Murray seems far more pessimistic and far less convinced that we can understand and control what we've begun. Perhaps he's correct. But maybe his doubt has something to do with his vocation. Historians have trouble dealing with rapid changes—with revolutions—since such upheavals defy continuity and repetition. In nonrevolutionary times we can turn to historians for explanations and what they tell us normally makes sense. They are, after all, among the best purveyors of wisdom that is conventional. But in revolutionary times their authority weakens and a historian's claim that the situation we face today is "what the military of the interwar years faced in 1923"—or that the future will be very much like the present—rings hollow.

But Murray is right on one point: the need for experimentation and critical scrutiny. Let's do it. But let's do it more broadly, more quickly, and differently than we are doing at present. Why don't we put new technologies into the hands of the men and women in the services, free at least some of them from the demands of readiness reporting, and push them to see if the technology works and how changes in doctrine and organization could make it work better? Why don't we seize on ideas like the "vanguard force" proposed by General Reimer and move the debate about the American RMA to empirical trials—*real* tests?

—James R. Blaker
Science Applications
International Corp.

OVER THE BOUNDING WAVES

To the Editor—Your review of *Creating a New Civilization: The Politics of the Third Wave* in the Spring 97 issue offered some interesting insights into the Tofflers and their book yet failed to raise a number of serious questions. Although I make no pretense of being able to resolve those questions, it may be useful to spell them out for the benefit of your readership.

Without doubt modern science has provided us with knowledge of natural phenomena that has produced dramatic changes in almost every facet of human life. From genetic research which led to biotechnological breakthroughs to physics which brought about innovations in the conduct of war, we approach the new century with possibilities that were once considered inconceivable. Few would deny these advances though many thoughtful people would admit that the significance of such changes in our lives remains enigmatic.

In *Creating a New Civilization*, Alvin and Heidi Toffler assert that modern technology has promoted so many revolutionary changes that civilization itself has been transformed. With little acknowledgment to dialectical thinkers such as Hegel, Marx, and Engels, the Tofflers slightly alter the Marxian dialectical movement of history. For Marx modes of production—dominant means by which humans sustain themselves in any given historical period—determine the way of life. For the Tofflers human history is best understood in terms of a metaphor of waves: the agricultural, the industrial, and finally the technological, the third wave. But the Marxian formulation of historical change is barely altered: an existing civilization is confronted and overwhelmed by a rising wave. Resistance to new forms of civilization by withering elements of the old continues so that residual aspects of the past continue until forced by circumstances to surrender to the movement of history.

Like the work of Marx, the wave is an interesting way of viewing history, but the metaphor should be seen for what it is. Like all metaphors there is the risk of distorting history by forcing ideas and facts into a preconceived framework.

At the center of the Toffler third wave is information, which is now available in a quantity and at a pace unknown to primitive technological societies. The authors also describe this process as "creating new networks of knowledge" that incorporate assumptions, hypotheses, images, and language codes. Their discussion of the knowledge system of the third wave obfuscates subtle but important distinctions. Careful reading indicates that they do not differentiate between knowledge and information or between knowledge and opinion. Although modern technology is a conduit for information not all information is knowledge. Some information, as the debate over censorship of the information highway suggests, is foolish and even scurrilous and should not be confused with knowledge. The greatest challenge facing the users of electronic networks is processing available information or discriminating between the important and the unimportant. Today thoughtful people have more noise to filter in order to evaluate reality.

More significantly, we must not confuse gathering information with acquiring knowledge. After information has been filtered, it must be understood in light of its relevance. The meaning of something—whether related to human activity or theoretical subjects—does not come simply from gathering or distributing information. A physician's transmission of medical information in mere seconds around the world to another physician becomes significant and beneficial because of their understanding of medicine. Obfuscating the processing of information with knowledge may blind us to the fact that there is no substitute for knowledge. The transmission of information and other technological innovations can have great advantages for national security, but we must never lose sight of the importance of knowledge of warfighting and the ends we seek to achieve.

In *Creating a New Civilization*, the Tofflers propose guidance for 21st century democracy. Alarmed over the collapse of consensus in contemporary America, they see the country beholden to majority rule that is not adapting to the increasing diversity of the third wave. They suggest a form of electronic town hall meeting that will enable citizens to participate in political decisionmaking. Their very confusing discussion of the Founders and representative democracy dismisses the fear of demagoguery in *Federalist Papers*—according to the authors a problem of an overly emotional public response—by advocating a cooling off period before making decisions. A proper response to the Tofflers would require an education in the nature of representative democracy, what Publius understood as refining the will of the people, and the deliberative function of a legislature. Again, the question is not whether the means to measure public opinion exist, but what the consequences are for the public good if such changes are implemented. I fear for the stability and harmony of the Nation if such changes are realized.

Technological change can be applied for better or worse. To understand whether the fruits of modern science serve or harm us requires pondering what is meant by better or worse—or some standard by which to guide such choices. The advent of a technology does not prove its benefits. The Tofflers confuse the relationship between technology and the public good. Worse, they hinder posing important questions. Beware of false prophets and those who say more than they know.

—Joseph E. Goldberg
Director of Research,
Industrial College of the Armed Forces

A CAPITAL OFFENSE?

To the Editor—Although I find *JFQ* informative and interesting, one thing about it is disturbing. The term Marine—used to identify the Marine Corps, a group or unit of Marines, or an individual Marine—is always capitalized. Always. There is no such thing as "a marine." No such animal. Capitalize Marine, Marines, Marine Corps, U.S. Marine, U.S. Marines, U.S. Marine Corps, and United States Marine Corps in future issues!

—Maj Eric J. Kennedy, USMC (Ret.)
Rock Island, Illinois

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Maj Kennedy's letter raises a point that may also concern other marines—as well as soldiers, sailors, and airmen—on capitalizing the names of services and servicemembers. The only use of the term in question without an initial capital M occurs when reference is made to an individual or group of individuals. Thus the short and long renderings of the name of a service (in this case, Marine Corps, U.S. Marines, U.S. Marine Corps) or any terms denoting a service as a whole (here, *the* Marines) are always capitalized. But individual members of a service (such as marine or marines) are not. The ultimate (official) guide in matters of style makes this clear:

> Marine Corps; the corps;
> Marines (the corps); *but* marines (individuals)
> —*United States Government Printing Office Style Manual* (1984)

Since the inaugural issue of *JFQ* went to press in 1993, there has been a deliberate effort to follow a standard form of capitalization when referring to the services and members of the Armed Forces. Therefore it is the U.S. Army or the Army, the U.S. Navy or the Navy, etc. Moreover, to strike a consistent balance in the pages of this journal, equal deference is given to designating an individual servicemember: soldier, sailor, marine, or airman (as well as coastguardsman when appropriate). Subscribers to *Marine Corps Gazette* may expect to always see Marine capitalized just as readers of *Airpower* magazine may confront the term Airmen. This is an unabashed token of service culture. But in the spirit of jointness—not "parade ground" political correctness—*JFQ* seeks symmetry in using themes and symbols (even upper case letters) in representing every service. *Semper Fi.*]